



# PSC NEWS

## Missouri Public Service Commission

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PSC APPROVES AGREEMENT PROVIDING BILL CREDITS TO LACLEDE CUSTOMERS**

#### ***PSC Staff estimated billing complaint to remain open***

JEFFERSON CITY---The Missouri Public Service Commission has approved an agreement which will provide bill credits of at least \$500,000 to Laclede Gas Company (Laclede) residential customers who received a catch-up bill on or after November 1, 2004, for a period exceeding 12 consecutive months of estimated usage.

Bill credits are to be made within the next 60 days. Bill credit costs will come from Laclede's shareholders and not its ratepayers.

The agreement settles an estimated billing complaint filed by the Office of the Public Counsel (OPC) against Laclede. OPC had alleged Laclede violated PSC regulations by billing customers for estimated gas usage for more than 12 months without obtaining an actual meter reading.

The Commission said the agreement will significantly benefit Laclede customers, particularly those who were most affected by the company's billing practices. To those customers, Laclede will be required to provide a bill credit for the gas that they actually used to compensate them for any hardship they may have suffered. Also under the agreement, Laclede will limit any residential billing of an undercharge to no more than 12 months from the date it obtains an actual meter reading.

To ensure Laclede's billing practices improve as a result of the measures required in the agreement, a separate estimated billing complaint brought against Laclede by the PSC Staff will remain open for three years. "If Staff finds that Laclede does not comply with the terms of the Stipulation and Agreement, as well as the monitoring conditions requested by Staff, Staff may again ask the Commission for authority to seek penalties against Laclede," the Commission's order said. The PSC Staff neither opposed nor supported the agreement reached in the OPC complaint against Laclede.

The Staff complaint contends Laclede failed to secure actual meter readings at least annually and failed to provide timely notification to customers that estimated bills may not reflect actual usage and that those customers may read and report their own meters.

The Commission's order approving the agreement reached in the OPC complaint case also requires Laclede to comply with the monitoring conditions proposed by the PSC Staff. Laclede is to provide:

- ✓ Consumer complaint responses in a more timely fashion;
- ✓ A monthly status report on its Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project;
- ✓ A monthly report on the number of estimated bills issued; and
- ✓ A monthly call center performance report.

Laclede Gas Company serves approximately 631,000 natural gas customers in the City of St. Louis as well as the Missouri counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Butler, Iron, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, St. Francois and Ste. Genevieve.